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# PLAIN TRACTS

FOR CRITICAL TIMES;

ON THE IMPORTANT SUBJECTS OF

BAPTISM AND REGENERATION,  
&c.

WITH AN ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE

OXFORD TRACTS,

&c. &c.

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BAPTISM,

ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE.

(PROFESSOR PUSEY—BISHOP BETHELL.)

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BY A UNION OF CLERGYMEN.

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LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY SMITH, ELDER AND CO. CORNHILL.

1838.

Theology Library  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
AT CLAREMONT  
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LONDON:  
PRINTED BY STEWART AND MURRAY,  
OLD BAILEY.



## BAPTISM, &c.

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It is asserted by Professor *Pusey*, that "baptism is an appointed means for conveying the Holy Spirit." We wish to know *where* it is so stated. It is truly lamentable, to find such an assertion repeatedly made, in a work professing to adhere strictly to the word of God, without a single reference to any place in that fountain of truth, which even borders on the subject. We have, in a former number, made especial inquiry respecting the two following points:—1. As to the original *document*, and its *language*, in which baptism has been appointed for the purpose above expressed. And on enquiry, we find that there is not, in the New Testament, a single word said about any original document, whatever, that relates directly to the primary *institution* of baptism, or to its original *adoption* by our Saviour. The words of our Lord and Saviour, "Go ye and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" we willingly allow, are, to us, an authorized *institution* and command to continue baptism in his church. But this, as we have before shewn, is neither the *origin* of baptism, nor its original adoption: and no *promised blessing*, whatever, is "*annexed*" thereto, but in connexion with faith:—2. As to *regeneration* in baptism, grounded as it is pretended to be, on our Saviour's discourse with Nicodemus: we have seen that those remarkable words, "born of water and of the Spirit," assert

no such thing: They only assure us, that a man cannot *enter* into the kingdom of God, which is the visible and real church of Christ, except he be born of water and of the Spirit. There is not one syllable said of "water" conveying the Holy Spirit, or of its having any thing to do in conveying it. But the whole context most clearly requires that the new birth, which is the work of the Spirit, should go *before* baptism.

We are now, therefore, in a situation to make scriptural investigation into the *nature, office, and effects*, of baptism, without any dread of those anathemas which the modern council of *Trent* appear to suspend over us.

We have already traced up the New Testament baptism to its probable origin in the Old; though there be no express institution of it, as such, found even there, unless it be allowed to have emanated from the divine appointment of the washings prescribed; especially, "the water of separation." As, however, our Lord has expressly appointed baptism as a sacrament, to be continued in his church, it clearly becomes of divine authority to us, *as a sacrament*. But still, as there is no information given of its original institution, or even of its adoption, we are compelled to borrow a right view of its character from the character of the Old Testament sacrament, which baptism has succeeded. Circumcision, therefore, is that to which we must first resort for information, as it bears the same relation to the old covenant, as baptism does to the New.

### I. *The Sacrament of* CIRCUMCISION.

This sacrament is recorded in Gen. xvii. as *instituted* by God himself. The covenant was made with Abraham before, (see chap. xv.) but it was renewed here, under this distinct rite, to be henceforth continued to him and his seed, and all his servants. The rite is very expressly worded, and particularized. After having stated the nature and blessings of the Covenant, God then specified the way in which it was to be *established*, in these words:—

"And I will establish my Covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting Covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy

seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." (7, 8.)

"This is my Covenant which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee.—Every man-child among you shall be circumcised.—It shall be a *token* of the Covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you,—he that is born in thy house, or bought with money of any stranger.—My Covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man-child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my Covenant." (10—14.)

That was the form of the Covenant of Circumcision. We may remark, that several important particulars ought to be here noticed:—

1. God expressly *renewed* and *established* his covenant with Abraham, when he appointed circumcision;—

2. The persons on whom it was enjoined, were Abraham and his seed, his servants and household;—

3. Circumcision is denominated God's Covenant, that is, as it is explained, the "*token* of the Covenant."

4. God appointed this rite, and enjoined it on Abraham and his seed, peremptorily and absolutely, commanding their consent and willingness to comply: non-compliance was a breaking of the covenant; and a cutting off from his people was to be the consequence.

The *essence*, or the spiritual and moral character of this covenant, was a covenant of grace: for it involves,—

1. God's promise—"I will be their God."—2. Man's obedience—"Ye shall keep my covenant." Thus the promise and the obedience are reciprocal: for God cannot be a God in this sense, to any but the obedient.—The promise, though primarily made of the land of Canaan, yet involves blessings which entitle it to be literally called an "everlasting covenant;" because the "seed" to whom the promise is made, is identified with Christ Jesus. It will here be our design first to *prove* the *spiritual* character of this covenant; and secondly, To shew that it is the same with that sealed by baptism:—



FIRST.—*The SPIRITUAL character of this Covenant.*

Circumcision, as we have seen, is called the *token* of the covenant. By which we must understand, that they who accepted it, and they who only witnessed it, were to consider it as a sign, or a mark by which the people of God were distinguished; that now they were no longer of the world, or at their own disposal; but, that being the Lord's people, and expecting peculiar blessings from him, they were bound, and they esteemed themselves bound, to believe and to do whatever their Covenant God required at their hands. It is perfectly clear, that Abraham, and his believing posterity, received this *token* as a sign and pledge of real friendship between themselves and God; and that as such, they really and truly gave themselves to him, and pledged their troth to God to be "his faithful soldiers and servants, to their lives' end."

The covenant of circumcision was, therefore, evidently a *bond of friendship* between God and Israel. God was their God, and Israel was his people; and this not in word and tongue only, but in deed and in truth. This "token" of the covenant, was called the covenant itself: because, with God there are no false tokens. Where this sign, seal, mark, or promise, is, *there* His covenant is. There is no "yea and nay," with him, but all is "yea." And with respect to *Abraham* and his true posterity, there are no delusive colours hung out. They do not exhibit this sign of friendship with God, while their hearts are after their idols: but of every true believer it may be said, that where his sign and seal are, there is he: You may always know where to find him.

The term "*sacrament*," signifying an "*oath*," necessarily implies mutual covenant and mutual faith, between the parties concerned. The "*oath*" which God made to the "*heirs of promise*," Heb. vi. 17. implied, supposed, and obtained, on the part of *those heirs*, faith in God's promises, and an obedient regard to his command. Heb. xi. 8—10.

Real, internal, spiritual *holiness*, and not merely relative and external, was required, symbolized, and exhibited, by this covenant, and by this token. This is strikingly and beautifully expressed by God himself, when speaking of his people, and distinguishing them from the world that lieth in wickedness:—"Ye are the children of the Lord



your God : for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God ; and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth." Deut. xiv. 1, 2. Their being the *children* of the Lord, implied, as we see, that they were a *holy* people unto him ; not only separated by name and external tokens, but really separated from sin, the world, and idols, and truly dedicated in heart and soul unto God. Any thing short of this was not the circumcision of God, but a surreptitious token, a delusive sign, which had no reality, and could, therefore, be entitled to no blessing.

That this real affection and devotedness to God, was implied in, required and pledged by circumcision, and was an essential part of the covenant blessings thereby symbolized, cannot be doubted by any one who really understands the spirit of religion, and duly attends to God's addresses to his people :—" And now, O Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to *fear* the Lord thy God, to *walk in* his ways, and to *love* him ; and to *serve* the Lord thy God with *all thy heart*, and with *all thy soul*.—Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your hearts, and be no more stiff-necked." Deut. x. 12—16. See Jer. iv. 4. ✓

To have a holy people *unto himself*, is expressly stated to have been the end and aim of God in separating a family from the rest of mankind, and in making with them this covenant of peace, and in giving circumcision as its token and bond :—" I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people :—and ye shall be holy unto me ; for I, the Lord, am holy, and have severed you from other people, *that ye should be mine*.—Ye shall be holy ; for I the Lord your God am holy." Lev. xx. 24—26. —xix. 2.

True separation from sin and sinners, and a consequent expectation of God's blessing, in the eternal world, according to the promises made in the covenant of circumcision, were of the essence of that character which designated Abraham and his true posterity, as we find it testified of them generally in the New Testament, and especially in the eleventh of the Epistle to the Hebrews. And any thing *short* of this is never admitted to *identify Abraham's children* :—" If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." Our Saviour said

this, though he allowed them to be his "children according to the flesh." But circumcision, without the true spirit of the covenant, did not constitute the Jews Abraham's children, as children of the promise, or as the children of God: nor did it, when the thing signified was wanting, come up at all to the true notion and character of circumcision, but wholly failed respecting the spiritual and primary design of its institution. The language of *St. Paul* on this point is very decisive. He calls it, when separated from this holy spirit, by a degrading name, "concision," or cutting off:—"Beware," he says, "of dogs; beware of evil workers; beware of the *concision*. For *we are the circumcision*, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Phil. iii. 2. In conformity with this idea, the apostle argues thus:—"Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God;" or, as in another place, "but faith, which worketh by love;" or, as in another, "but a new creature." 1 Cor. vii. 19.—Gal. v. 6.—vi. 15. So, also, with respect to the Jew, or the *true* child of Abraham, who is what he professes to be, or what his circumcision symbolizes, or binds him to; the apostle makes nothing of the outward sign without the heart, "the inward and spiritual grace:"—"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and *circumcision is that of the heart*, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Rom. ii. 28, 29.

SECONDLY.—*The Covenant made with Abraham and ratified by Circumcision, is the SAME with the Covenant FULFILLED IN CHRIST and SEALED BY BAPTISM.*

The apostle Paul argues this matter at large, in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Romans. He shews from the circumstance, that Abraham was justified by faith, while he was "yet uncircumcised," how he became hereby a pattern to, and "a father" of, all believers under the new dispensation; forasmuch as God would justify the circumcision, and the uncircumcision in the same way, that is, by faith. Rom. iii. 30. He there tells us the nature and design of that rite:—"And he received

the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had, being yet uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also." Rom. iv. 11. He follows the same line of argument in his Epistle to the Galatians:—"Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. iii. 7, 8, 9. 26. 29. This subject is again and again introduced by the apostle. We shall now only refer to the following, in which his argument is very remarkable:—"Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers,—that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy,"—might trust in the root of Jesse,—and rejoice with his people. Rom. xv. 8—12.

From these passages, selected from many more to the same effect, we may derive very important instruction relative to our present subject:—

1. That the *blessings* which *Christ* came into the world to confirm and fulfil, were "promises made to the fathers,"—and that the exalted privileges which are come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, are summed up in "the blessing of Abraham."

2. That when the Gentiles are spoken of as "*children of God* by faith in Christ Jesus," this is represented as being "*the children of Abraham*," and "*the seed of Abraham*;" as if the most exalted enjoyment of the Gentile world, under the new dispensation, was that of being incorporated with "*his people*," who formed his church under the old; and their being invited to "*rejoice*" *with them*.

3. That *faith* is the grand essential property of the soul under both dispensations, to which all these blessings are *annexed*,—and that the gospel of the Gentiles was, in substance, the gospel "*preached before unto Abraham*;"

which he believed, and in which he rejoiced, seeing in this gospel "the day of Christ."

4. That the rite of circumcision was the *seal* and *token* of God's covenant with Abraham, which covenant involved essentially all the blessings of the gospel, which we now by faith enjoy.

We shall proceed to consider ;—

## II. *The Sacrament of BAPTISM, as substituted for Circumcision.*

Baptism has taken the place of circumcision, and bears a character exactly analogous to it. St. Paul, who was "the minister of the Gentiles," teaches us professedly the character of both these sacraments. After stating the true spiritual character of *circumcision*, what its very essence implied, he proceeds to notice *baptism*, and the blessings implied in it, just as if they were only one ordinance, and one series of sacred privileges, referring all to Christ, and making every thing take its value and importance from Him :—"And ye are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power: in whom, also, ye are *circumcised* with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in *baptism*, wherein also, ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." Col. ii. 10—13. It is obvious, from these texts—respecting circumcision and baptism,—

That the nature and design of both are the same, and that the *effects annexed to baptism* are identical with the *effects annexed to circumcision*,—identical, that is, in every thing but their brightness and degree, the blessings being more glorious in the fulfilment, than in their typical representation.

In order to illustrate this position, we need only observe,—

That they are tokens of the *same* covenant.



That they represent the *same* character.

That they seal the *same* privileges,—and,

That in both cases the external rite is valuable *only* on account of *those things* which it seals and represents.

We shall very briefly confirm these points.—We learn, from the foregoing extracts that *Abraham* is “the father” of those who *believe in Christ*. Now we would ask, what had *Abraham* to do with the “*Gentile*” believers? or, indeed, with any believers in *Christ*, on Professor *Pusey’s* principles? And yet we see that he is called the father of all such. But how? He was not the natural progenitor of the *Gentile* believers; though he was of the Jewish: how, then, was he their spiritual father? It was not through *his* instruction, or influence, that the *Gentiles* believed in *Christ*. How, then, was *Abraham* their father? Simply from this circumstance,—God originally made with *Abraham* the covenant of salvation in *Christ Jesus*. *Abraham* believed in the covenant, embraced the Saviour promised in it, and went to heaven by virtue of those promises, which are now come upon the *Gentiles*. It must, therefore, follow, that the *Gentiles* believe the same covenant, embrace the same Saviour, and go to heaven by means of the same “*Gospel*” as *Abraham* did. Thus, *Abraham’s* covenant is their covenant; *Abraham’s* Saviour is their Saviour; *Abraham’s* faith and character are their faith and character; and *Abraham’s* felicity is their felicity.

He was their *spiritual father*, in the highest sense in which he could be so. All their blessings of a spiritual nature, both of grace and glory, grew, as it were, out of him, as their root; that is, out of the covenant made with him, and fulfilled in *Christ Jesus*, as it is expressed in the following promise:—“In *thee* shall all the families of the earth be blessed;” and in another of a similar import:—“*Thou* shalt be a father of many nations.”

Thus, then, believing *Gentiles* are the true spiritual children of *Abraham*; and to be the children of *Abraham*, is the same thing with being “the children of God, by faith in *Christ Jesus*.” Hence, therefore, we see that the *same* covenant, and the *same* character, are common to *Abraham*, and to all who are in *Christ*, by faith, *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*.

Now this character, and these privileges, are *equally* represented and symbolized, by circumcision and by baptism.

When St. Paul assures the Colossians that they are "complete" in Christ, he summarily expresses this, by saying,—“Ye are *circumcised* with the circumcision of Christ,—ye are buried with him in *baptism*,—and ye are risen with him through *faith*.” And, “baptised into Christ,” is set forth as the same thing, (in Rom. vi. 4.) with becoming “dead unto sin,” and rising to “newness of life.” And when St. Paul would conclude the harmonious union of Jew and Gentile, or of circumcision and baptism, together with their significant privileges, he gives the substance in this form:—“Ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus: for as many of you as have been *baptised into Christ*, have put on Christ.” He then merges both Jew and Gentile in one simple mode of hope and safety:—“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female;” that is, privileged or excluded as such; “for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” And then comes that remarkable climax:—“And if ye be Christ’s, then ye are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Gal. iii. 26—29. Thus *baptism* makes us Abraham’s seed, as did *circumcision*. It is, however, still true, that we are “*all* the children of God, (and only so) by *faith* in Christ Jesus.”

We may now ask Professor *Pusey* this plain question,—Where is that *scriptural* testimony on which he builds the grand and essential distinction, between baptism and circumcision,—that distinction which makes circumcision a “sign and seal only,” and baptism “an appointed means for conveying the Holy Spirit?” The clear fact is, that there is *not a vestige* of scriptural evidence for such a distinction. The whole is a mere invention, from beginning to end. We have seen, that what circumcision *was*, baptism *is*, and no more. Nay, we should not clearly understand the real nature and character of *this* institution, could we not trace it up to its descent from circumcision, and the covenant of God with Abraham.

We may remark that one great source of this error is, the confusion of ideas respecting the dispensation of *Abraham* and that of *Moses*. Bishop Bethell, in con-

junction with Professor *Pusey*, speaks of the "older dispensation," in degrading language. They consider it as the dispensation of *Moses*, a system of "temporal promises," a thing that is old and passed away; and they make depreciating comparisons between Christ's *institution*, and the *signs and seals only*, (as they call them), of the older dispensation. But this is all a delusion. The Mosaic law has nothing to do with the giving of the covenant and of the rite of circumcision. That covenant was the covenant of Abraham; and that rite was the rite of Abraham. The promise of the Gospel had its origin confirmed, and specified here; and the Mosaic establishment did not commence, nor intercept, but continue it. The apostle Paul is so remarkably pointed on this subject, that one scarcely knows, how any scriptural student can possibly misunderstand him:—"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. And this I say, that the *covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ*; the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, *cannot disannul*, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but *God gave it to Abraham by promise.*" Gal. iii. 16—18.

It is evident, then, that the COVENANT *is not changed*. It was established "of God in Christ" to Abraham; and it has *never* been *disannulled*, but fulfilled. It was Christ's covenant *then*, and so it is *now*. The introductory right is changed, but the covenant is still the same.

This, then, being the case, it is obvious that the *form* only of the rite being changed, there can be no change in the OFFICE which the rite performs, any more than the change of the entrance into the palace would make any difference in the privileges of those who obtained admission into it. There is but *one* covenant of grace; there is but *one* way to heaven. *Moses*, who gave the law, "esteemed the reproach of *Christ*," and so did all "holy men of God in old time" as *now*.

HENCE, THEN, we see the utter demolition of every thing that consitutes this modern theory. Neither the *Professor*, nor Bishop *Bethell*, has the least pretension to evidence, except on the *assumption* that baptism has obtained, by virtue of its "divine institution," an office

differing essentially from that of circumcision. They are forced into this invention, because circumcision is so expressly denominated, both by Moses and St. Paul, the *token*, the *sign*, and the *seal* of the covenant, that it is impossible to compel that language to signify “the channel or conveyance of the Holy Spirit.” But when *no* original institution can be found for baptism, they can *fancy* any secret or mysterious influence “*annexed*” to it, which suits their system. But there is not a shadow of countenance to this assumption found in the word of God. Nay, if “*divine INSTITUTION*” is to distinguish and exalt a *rite*, circumcision has by far the pre-eminence ; for its divine institution is very minutely recorded, while that of baptism is not.

The sum of what we have been proving is the following :—

1. That circumcision and baptism are tokens of the same covenant.

2. That they are representatives of the same holy and spiritual character.

3. That they are seals of the same privileges,—the privileges of the covenant of grace ; and

4. That each of these rites, as it may be hence inferred, is valuable *only* on account of the things which it seals or represents.

Each of these particulars will receive farther confirmation, as we proceed to state more fully and specifically,—

### III. *The DESIGN and OBJECT of Baptism.*

The real *nature* of this ordinance, as we have already proved, cannot be learnt directly from any description given of it ; because there is no account of its *institution* or *introduction* recorded by Christ or his apostles in the New Testament. Its nature can only be inferred or deduced from some intimations of its necessity for entering into the kingdom of God, from certain things spoken of it in the introduction of persons into the Christian church, and from some passages, such as we have been reciting, in which it is alluded to in connection with the people of God. From the whole of which passages we have seen that it has taken the place of circumcision, and sustains the *same office*. The design and object, therefore, of circumcision will show to us the design and object of bap-



tism. *Circumcision* was INSTITUTED with great particularity : so was the *passover*, and so was the *Lord's supper*. But inasmuch as there has been *nothing of this kind* with respect to *baptism*, but only with respect to its having been practised *and commanded by our Saviour to be continued* in his church, it seems imperative, that as we trace the gospel covenant to the fathers, so also we must trace the design and object of the gospel rite to the design and object of the rite belonging to the fathers. Hence, then, we learn that

*Baptism is what circumcision was.*

*Circumcision* was a “token of the covenant,” called “the covenant itself.” *Baptism* is the same. “The covenant” was a mutual accordence between God and man : God was to be “their God,” and they were to be “his people.” So it is under the covenant as fulfilled in Christ : “I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters.” 2 Cor. vi. 18. This implies, on man's part, love to God, faith in Christ, and a willing mind to be the Lord's “soldiers and servants unto their lives' end.” And on God's part, all the blessings of grace and glory are hereby signified.

*Baptism*, as we have shown in our remarks on John iii. 5, is necessary, as well as the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, in order to “enter into the kingdom of God.” All the blessings of this kingdom are *signed* and *sealed* in a visible and public manner when the believer enters into covenant with the Saviour, by baptism. It is the marriage ceremony between him and Christ. He renounces “the world, the flesh, and the devil,” and engages, with pure heart and mind, to follow Christ as his only Lord and Saviour ; and the Saviour pledges, that he “shall never perish, neither shall any pluck him out of his hand.”

*Baptism* as “the washing of regeneration,” *signifies* or *represents* a believing, and, consequently, a regenerate state of soul, or a spiritual change of mind. It supposes, as we have seen in considering John iii. 5, that the heart is already turned from every other object to Christ the Saviour ; and baptism is symbolical of this holy change of mind. A believing mind, as we then proved, was a regenerate mind ; for faith is always required *before* baptism. “Repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ,” are stated in scripture and in our

church, and are even allowed by Bishop *Bethell* and Professor *Pusey*, to be requisites for baptism. But where repentance and faith are found, *there*, according to the word of God, regeneration, justification, and salvation, are found. These are never separated in any portion of the divine word.

*Here*, we know, we are at issue with many modern writers on the subject. For they strenuously maintain, that we are regenerated by baptism, that we are pardoned and justified by baptism, that we are brought primarily into a state of grace by baptism, and that these privileges are not only signed, and sealed, and represented to the believer, but that they are actually conveyed to him by baptism.

Such a statement we regard as extremely erroneous, and wholly inconsistent with divine truth. For the scripture considers, that baptism is only valuable for the things which it represents,—and that the blessings which it represents are always connected with salvation; and this we shall briefly shew. We say then—

1. That baptism is valuable *only* for the things which it *represents*, or to which it introduces, and not as Dr. *Pusey* asserts,—“on its own account.”

It *represents* a new, regenerate heart, and *introduces* us into the society of the children of God, and into the enjoyment of their blessings. Baptism, as the apostle clearly shews, is of the same nature with circumcision. It implies and requires a renewed heart, and is worthless without it: yea, without it, its genuine character is lost, and it is no baptism:—“He is *not* a Jew, which is one (only) outwardly; neither *is* that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he (only) is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter: whose praise is not of men, but of God.” Rom. ii. 28, 29. With the same principle in view he teaches us, in another place, and says, “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a *new creature*.” Gal. vi. 15.

This, by the apostle’s analogy between circumcision and baptism, and the *identity of baptism with regeneration*, according to Bishop *Bethell*, and Dr. *Pusey*, would run thus: In Christ Jesus, neither baptism availeth any thing, nor the want of baptism, but a new creature. Now sub-

stitute *regeneration* for baptism, its identity; and it will be as follows, "neither regeneration availeth any thing, nor unregeneration, but a *new creature*; i. e. *regeneration* !

The same apostle affords a striking testimony to the genuine spirituality, and holiness, required and represented by circumcision, in addressing the formal and self-righteous professors of religion, among the Philippians; and which exemplifies, to a demonstration, the exact accordance between what is represented by circumcision, and what is represented by baptism. In warning his people against Jewish zealots, who insisted on circumcision as necessary to enter into the kingdom of God, under the gospel, the spiritual import of which was lost sight of by its advocates: he says, in a passage we have already quoted, "Beware of evil workers, beware of the *conceision*: for *we* are the *circumcision*, who *worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus.*" Phil. iii. 3. And from this reproach he does not even exempt his *own* circumcision, zeal, and previous superior attainments in the Jewish religion, but casts them all off, as loss, for the sake of the blessings attained "through the faith of Christ." (5—9.) Instead, therefore, of circumcision being *proscribed*, as Professor *Pusey* would have it, by St. Paul, as "a sign suited only" to a temporary, and even a carnal dispensation; the apostle draws its true character, as suited to the *high experience of the best Christians*, and assures us that its pure spiritual import is only correctly exemplified by those who "worship God in the spirit, rejoice only in the redemption of Christ Jesus," and make no pretensions to put the least trust in their own works.

Another strong argument is to be derived from the manner in which St. Paul speaks of the *privileges* of the Jews, when at their future restoration they shall return to the Lord. He does not describe these privileges and enjoyments by any new set of terms, or by the peculiar system of things existing under the new dispensation. He does not, for instance, say that they shall be regenerated, and made the children of God, as if they never were such under the old dispensation; but that if they "continue not in unbelief," they shall be *re-instated* in their own covenant a *second* time: "How much more shall these,

which be the *natural branches*, be grafted into their own olive tree." Rom. xi. 24. "Their *own* olive tree;"—clearly not the *Mosaic* dispensation; they will not return to that, but to the *covenant of Abraham*, and to its blessings,—the pardon and salvation, to which the Old Testament believers were entitled.

Saint Peter, also, makes the salvation into which baptism brings us, "in a figure" to result to us, *not* from baptism, or "the washing away the filth of the flesh," but from "the answer of a good conscience towards God." 1 Pet. iii. 21. We proceed now to shew,

2. That the *blessings* which baptism *represents* are always connected with *salvation*.

It appears little less than miraculous that our *Professor* should assert, as he does, that we are regenerate in baptism, and not without it. "Baptism," he says, "is spoken of as the source of our spiritual birth as no other cause is, save God: we are not said, namely, to be regenerated by faith, or love, or prayer, or any grace which God worketh in us." (p. 12.) Not regenerated "by *faith*, or *love*, or *prayer*!" Our author might as well have said, that we are not regenerated by regeneration. Faith, love, and prayer, are each and every one of them, the appropriate graces of all the regenerate, and have ever been found peculiar to the saints of God, in all ages. It is characteristic of the divine covenant, that "he that *calleth* on the name of the Lord shall be saved." And of "faith," and public acknowledgment of Christ, St. Paul says, "If thou shalt *confess* with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt *believe* in thine heart, that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Rom. x. 13. And with respect to "*love*," it is the brightest of all the Christian graces, and the most like to God of any thing:—"Faith, hope, and charity; but the greatest of these is charity." 1 Cor. xiii. 13. "Love is of God; and every one that loveth is *born* of God, and knoweth God."—"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." 1 John iv. 6; v. 1. The same may be said of *every christian grace*. Matt. v. 3—12.

Hence we see that the *Professor* has *inverted* the scriptural account of all this matter. Salvation is promised to *every grace* of the believing or regenerate mind; and baptism is *without value when such graces are absent*.



“Faith, love, and prayer,” are spiritual “graces which God worketh in us:” and wherever such graces exist, there exist the “regenerate” and “elect people of God.”

From what has been advanced, therefore, the scriptural import, or the design and nature of baptism, may be pretty clearly discerned:—

*Baptism represents regeneration, and is its image.*

*It seals the covenant of grace, and its privileges.*

*It encloses with a sacred emblem the Church of Christ.*

We do not object to the *Professor's* idea, that the divine image, both in holiness and holy joy, might very often in primitive times, be “sealed” on the souls of those who forsook all for Christ’s sake, and in baptism publicly “put on Christ,” in confession and spirituality; for it accords with Christ’s promise, “He that honoureth me,” or, “he that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before the angels of God.” Only we must be careful not to confine the sealing of the Holy Spirit to baptism. All the promises of God, which he has made to his spiritual Israel—to the kingdom of God, the members of which are all “born of water and of the Spirit,” may be considered as included in, and sealed by baptism. But, then, we must mark, with invincible firmness, the true ground, as already particularly noticed, on which all the promises are made to us at baptism. *It is not baptism simply*, to which any promise is made, or to which any spiritual blessing whatever is “annexed;” but to “faith”—to “repentance”—to a spiritual disposition of mind, issuing in, and confessing Christ at baptism. And there is not a single promise, we believe, in all the word of God, made to baptism, unless in connexion with some spiritual and holy principle.

When, therefore, we “acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins,” we particularly need to understand, that “faith and repentance” are always to be implied. To them that “believe and are baptised,” is remission of sins promised; and to those who “repent and are baptised,” is forgiveness promised. But we cannot find one promise made to baptism simply. It would have been safer, therefore, to express the article in the creed, as the “baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,” as it is

done in scripture; it would then have been less liable to be misunderstood, and misapplied, as it is at this time.

It has, indeed, been asserted even by Bishop Pearson, that "forgiveness of sins is promised to all who are *baptised* in the name of Christ:" and he refers, in confirmation of this, to Mark i. 4.—Acts ii. 38; xxii. 16.—Eph. v. 26. But it is clear, that baptism was not *alone* in these cases: for, that in the two first references, *repentance* is expressly mentioned. St. Paul's *conversion* attends the third; and the *sanctification* of Christ's church, by "the washing of water by the word" believed, accompanies the fourth. That learned divine, it is true, has in the paragraph alluded to, introduced the consideration of "qualifications," in order to the due effect of baptism; and when he says, "in the name of Christ," we must, as we think, understand faith in his name. He has not, however, made out the point, that forgiveness of sins is any where in scripture promised to baptism, unless connected with a renewed heart, and spiritual affections: and when he speaks of performing "all things necessary," he must, as we conceive, mean faith and repentance, which are the very things in question. Indeed, the language "that forgiveness of sins is promised" to baptism, is not only unscriptural, but the sentiment is so. For if baptism "convey" the forgiveness of sins, it must do this either without any holy disposition preceding baptism, — or else, though repentance and faith go before, as pre-requisites, yet not as ensuring pardon, *that* being connected with baptism, which follows after them.

This is, indeed, the doctrine of Bishop *Bethell*, and Professor *Pusey*. For they boldly assert, that St. Paul was neither regenerated, nor pardoned for the three days on which he fasted and prayed, after Christ came from heaven to convert him, from a sanguinary persecutor, to an apostle of the Gentiles. This is highly unscriptural. For, independent of our Lord's declaration to Ananias,—"He is a chosen vessel unto me," it is quite clear that Saul's heart was changed from rebellion to obedience, from a violently hostile to a teachable and praying spirit, and from unbelief to faith—a faith devout, humble, and submissive,—graces which always bear the stamp of salvation.

When our Lord mentions "*water*," as introductory to

his kingdom, it is in connexion with the "*Spirit*." And when, after his resurrection, he joins *baptism* with being *saved*, it is in connexion with *believing*. And it is so in *every* instance recorded in the New Testament; *some grace*, indicative of a *renewed* and *believing* mind, is manifested or professed. And if we depart from that divine standard, as it may seem but a little, in a matter so important as this, we cannot know, or even guess how extensive the error may become, and how irreparable the evil. But will it be asked, What then is the scriptural connexion between baptism and regeneration, pardon and salvation? and, What is the use of baptism at all, and why is it in any way joined with salvation, if the true mode be so difficult to be comprehended, and error so easy and so dangerous? The spiritual key to this difficulty has been already given, — a difficulty, however, which is made such by our own natural blindness and perversity. Before we are spiritually taught of God, we have no right conceptions of "the kingdom of God:" And having, therefore, formed merely external, or carnal notions of its character, we pervert divine truth to comport with our errors, or fritter down the exalted character of scriptural religion, to a level with our own standard.—We shall now, therefore, consider briefly,

#### IV. *The SCRIPTURAL USE of Baptism.*

We have previously stated, that baptism is represented in scripture as a sign—seal—pledge—token, or, as an introduction into the covenant of grace. Yea, God himself calls circumcision "*the covenant*." He so calls it as our Saviour calls the "bread" his "body;" not that it is so, in fact, but because it is intended to *represent* his body. Thus baptism, inasmuch as it *encircles* the kingdom of God, is appointed to represent both the real *character* of its members, and the *blessings* which belong to them; or, in other words, it shews that this kingdom consisted of God's people, and that he, the King thereof, is their God. According to the interpretation given of John iii. 5. it evidently appeared, that the regeneration of the Holy Spirit forms the individual *character* of Christ's servants, and that baptism forms them into a *visible body*. A visible church of Christ was quite necessary, that there might be a "pillar and ground of the truth," a body authorised

to carry his gospel, and plant his religion in the world; and that there might be a corporate society into which individual converts might flee from the power of Satan unto God, in which they might "build up themselves in their most holy faith," to the glory and praise of Him who called them out of this sinful world, and planted them in "the kingdom of his dear Son." This kingdom, though enclosed by a visible "token" of character, is nevertheless the pure spiritual undefiled spouse of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is *drawn* together by the love of God, *redeemed* by the blood of Christ, and *sanctified* by the Holy Ghost.

*Baptism*, therefore, bears an office inconceivably important. It incloses and represents every thing that is most valuable on earth, and that is ripening for the glory of heaven. It embraces God's children in their respective generations, as they are successively renewed, and brought to a spiritual state of mind and faith in the Saviour. The portal of scriptural baptism has this superscription on it—"The name of the Lord is as a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." This is what we conceive to be the *scriptural object and design of baptism*. It is the *token* of God's love, and it marks and signalizes the sanctified and elect people of God.

This representation does not regard what baptism *may* become by the perversion, and ever deteriorating conduct of man. It has no eye to the influx of persons, who, from interested motives, when the kingdom of God becomes popular, may press for admission into it, "without having on a wedding garment." Such are not valued in the sight of God: and in the arrangement of his sacred ordinances, at least in their *design* and *constitution*, he has no regard to such characters. And it was on *this ground* we consider, that the primitive church was formed by the apostles; and after them, by the early fathers; who, nevertheless, soon admitted, as we have already instanced, a sort of language into their offices, which was not perfectly scriptural, and which their less spiritual successors *perverted* to the worst of purposes. But, we believe, that the apostles had, that the fathers had, and that our own reformers had, their eye especially, if not exclusively, fixed on the *holy members* of the true "*kingdom of God*."



If we are here asked *the reason* why the ancient christians, and the church of England, in its offices, have so apparently united baptism with regeneration, and salvation, when the FACT does not justify what seems to be thus taught, we would answer,—that we have already replied to this question, in our last paragraph.

But we must here remark, that the *truth of our theory* has nothing to do with *ostensible* FACT. It does not extend, as we have repeatedly observed, to every thing which has the name or appearance of a church, but to the kingdom of God, and to that only, which is “born of water and of the Spirit.” Every member of this body is holy. None can *enter* into it without being “born of water and of the Spirit.” Therefore baptism and the Holy Ghost are here *always* united. Where, as before expressed, you see the *token* (as nothing in this kingdom is deceitful,) there you see the *believing and regenerate children of God*. The only difficulty arises from the mixed nature of the *operation*, by which the kingdom of God is formed in the world. The whole plan is divine. The internal agency is divine. The general arrangement is divine. But the *machinery*, so to speak, is worked by man. He preaches the word. He administers the ordinances. He receives members into the kingdom of God by baptism: at least he supposes he does so. But as he does not know the heart, he may mistake. God “knows them that are his:” and these only are the true members of the kingdom. But as man does not know, though he is officially employed in gathering this kingdom, a difficulty must needs ensue, which it will be quite necessary to guard against. We shall, therefore, here make a few brief observations on these two subjects,—*the holy catholic church*, and the *professing church*.

*First, the holy catholic church.*

We are not aware that we have any opinion on this point, different from that of *Hooker* and *Bishop Pearson*, or from the nineteenth article of our church, which says, that it is “*a congregation of faithful men*.” It is, what our Saviour declares the kingdom of God to be,—composed of such as are “born of water and of the Spirit.” Baptism is the door of entrance into this holy church. All its members are holy. God calls them holy. His covenant is with them. His Spirit dwells in

them. Baptism seals them as His. His divine image is impressed on their hearts; and his rite stands as a divine "token" to represent the internal image of God. They are all spiritual and regenerate souls. It is of this *holy church* that the scripture speaks, as we conceive, when it says such great things. This is the "peculiar people" of God. This is the church into which the apostles baptised such as believed in Christ to "the saving of the soul." This is that holy body of saints and faithful brethren, to whom the apostles addressed their epistles, and whom they designate as being sanctified in Christ Jesus, justified in his righteousness, and made heirs of eternal glory."

The only *caution* we would here suggest is this,—we should never confound this holy church, though all its members be holy, with "believers," or the truly regenerate *as such*; as if this church embraced them all, and at all times. Bishop Pearson, and many others, seem to do this. But we have already shewn that this never was the case, and that it never can be the case, while converts from the world are being made by the gospel. They must *all* be *believers* *before* they are admitted; and there must be a time, greater or less, according to circumstances, during which professed believers, and therefore also true believers, must remain under the character of catechumens or probationers. Such are born of the Spirit, though not yet baptised, or "born of water." The scripture, as we have seen, teaches this. "He that believeth on him, hath everlasting life." Baptism does not make a man a believer; it requires faith beforehand. But

Baptism *designates* believers or the regenerate. Before baptism they do not enter into the kingdom. They are, therefore, not of Christ's *church*, though they are believers, and would go to heaven as the crucified thief did, and many martyrs and sincere holy converts have done, who died without having ever *entered* into the church of God. The *baptised*, therefore, can alone be *recognised* by the church as believers, or regenerate, or heirs of heaven, though others may be members of the mystical body of Christ, and as such go to heaven.

Hence we see how the *baptised* and the *regenerate* came to be nearly identified:—

1. *They are so denominated in scripture.* They are

“born of water and of the Spirit.” This is the case with every real member of the true church; he is baptised, he is regenerate. The *theory* and the *fact* agree with respect to all such members. God spake to Abraham of circumcision, (and Christ speaks the same respecting baptism,) “*this is my covenant, my covenant is with thee;*” that is, the sign for the thing signified by the sign, the “*token*” of the covenant.

2. *The early fathers*, according to St. Augustine, denominated sacraments in this way. “Sacraments,” he says, “are holy signs,” that is, signs of holy things, of the new birth, of the election of God, of his true church. And as we have observed, the *fact*, as well as the *theory*, respecting this spiritual church, is true. They are all baptised; they are all born again, though not spiritually born by baptism, but *before* they were baptised. Yet as the true church is the holy church, no mischief could arise, in a practical shape, from speaking of their baptism as their regeneration, *because in every member of this church both were united.\**

3. *Our baptismal offices*, and indeed all the offices of our liturgy, *were made for this true*, believing, holy church; as circumcision and baptism were made, as appointed by God, for the same. They legitimately belong to this church and to no other. Christ Jesus, strictly speaking, has *no other* church. Let not the reader be startled at this declaration; let him thoroughly consider so as to understand the matter, and he will soon see its truth. There can be no other church strictly belonging to Christ but the *true one*. Hence it is, that every office in our liturgy is full of holy petitions, prayers, thanksgivings, expectations, and assurances; for they scarcely stop at hope. Regeneration and baptism, though not identified, are yet in Christ’s church connected: and in “the kingdom of God” they are, as we have seen, connected in scripture. “Every male child shall be circumcised.” Every one that “entereth into the kingdom of God,” must be “born of water and of the Spirit.”

Having these *scriptural truths* firmly riveted in our

\* As Mr. Miller, in his History has observed—No great evil could arise in Cyprian’s time from confounding regeneration with baptism, because, generally speaking, they were then both united; but in our day it becomes a poisonous error.

minds, we shall be able to see what would otherwise be very mysterious, namely, the true ground and *reason* why *our offices* speak in the way they do. And though we may not wholly consider every phrase as perfectly uniform and consistent, (for some of them have a gentle touch of the ambiguous language of the fathers,) yet we shall not fail to observe how *nearly* they correspond with what would *naturally* arise in a pious mind from such considerations as have been stated respecting the true, the holy, the only "kingdom of God." We shall also further perceive the extreme *difficulty* of constructing offices for *this holy church* in any way that differs essentially from our own; or indeed at all, except in a few words or phrases.

*Secondly.* The *professing church*.

Were all who *profess* Christ's holy religion, holy persons, no difficulty would arise, because there would be no confusion. But the evil as well as the difficulty, has now become very great. There is a professing church which is *not* a church, though called by that name. There are those who profess to be, and call themselves Christians, who are *not* Christians; and yet they bear that name both in the church and in the scripture. God, as we have heard, calls such in numerous places "his people," who were *not* his people, according to his *own* definition, but had only the name of being so. If the reader asks, why does the scripture call persons by names which their *character* does not indicate? we shall not answer him by saying, "Who art thou that repliest against God;" but we shall request him to *think out the case*. And we shall also ask him another question.—Why is *any* person called in scripture, or in any other document, a Christian? and why were any baptised into the church by the apostles, as Christians? God did not say of each of them, "He is a chosen vessel unto me." On what ground, then, were they baptised? Clearly on the ground of their *PROFESSION*, accompanied with the *appearance* of a new heart which they at the time exhibited. This is the only ground on which men *can* judge of the hearts of men, till farther experience develope them; it is on the ground of a creditable profession. "Man judgeth according to the outward appearance." God does not blame him for this; for he has no other way of judging. This correctly corresponds with our remarks on "*Ministerial Instruction*," in the Second Number.



Every one, therefore, who *appears* to believe the religion of Christ, and *professes* to do so, is baptised in his name, and must be so baptised as an allowedly sincere convert. And in the very act of baptising, as there is but one baptism, and that the baptism of the true church, he must be admitted as a truly regenerate person, into the holy society of regenerate men; because in no other character can he be admitted. Christ has not two churches, or two baptisms, but one church and one baptism. All persons, then, who are baptised and admitted into the Christian church must, in some way, be called Christians, and allowed to be so, though they may not be Christians indeed. And this arises from the unavoidable imperfection of human knowledge. The church does not know men's hearts, though the allwise God does; and a settlement will take place in due time, but this he reserves to himself.

There is no *inconsistency* in this; it is no arbitrary arrangement, but the necessity of the case. The ordinances of Christ are for godly persons, and for none else. But some that are not godly seek a name and admission by them, though they have no authority from Him for doing so. Christ requires a holy heart, and all pretend to it; all therefore are admitted on *the same ground*, though all are not his people. The Saviour forms his church after his own heart, and knows it. But the rest, though they assume His name, yet, having not the Spirit of Christ, are "none of His." He says himself, in allusion to these tares among the wheat, "*An enemy hath done this.*" How is this, then, remedied in scripture? We answer, as we have answered before in the case of Mr. Budd, *not by ordinances*, which deal with all alike, *but by doctrine*, by description of *character*. Men, from the imperfection of our knowledge, must be admitted and designated according to their profession and appearance. But the scripture explicitly says, "Let no man deceive himself; he that doeth righteousness is righteous:" and he only is righteous, whatever name he may bear. What, therefore, are we to think, if we find men professing to be "new creatures," and still lead a sinful life? Have we any reason to say, on scripture ground, that they have *lost* their regeneration, or that they pretended, like Simon Magus, to what they never had? "They went out from us; but they *were not of us*," is *St. John's* solution of the question, and it should be ours. [See note at the end, p. 35.]

We shall conclude this Number with a few *remarks* which bear especially on the two preceding subjects, and give illustration to their character.

We more than suspect that the *primitive fathers* gave too much encouragement to the notion, (and we are sure, that some of the moderns do,) that baptism is absolutely necessary to salvation, or, at least, generally connected with it. They did not distinguish with sufficient clearness the *true spiritual* church of Christ from its visible and *professing* members. But these are by no means identical. The visible church is said, in the nineteenth article, to be "a congregation of faithful men." This is the true church, and the description is peculiar to it, though it be called visible. But in the twenty-sixth article it is said, the visible church has "evil ever mingled with the good." These two should not be confounded. They are not the same. The visible church contains many of these holy persons, but not all of them. They all derive their doctrines from the visible church; but they are not all necessarily in it, though they ought to be, generally speaking; and they will be in it when within their reach.

*Baptism* distinguishes the visible church,—

*Holiness* distinguishes the true saints, though not always visible to us.

We will illustrate this matter by a few examples.—In Christ's family of twelve apostles, we find the visible church. But only eleven of these were its true members. One was "a devil," though a professor and in the visible body.—The apostles gathered a visible church, and thousands were made its members by baptism. But *Simon Magus*, *Ananias*, and *Sapphira*, were not its true spiritual members. And yet *this* church did not contain all the truly pious in Judea and its neighbourhood. For *Cornelius* was a truly holy man before he was baptised, and thus became a member of the visible church. "His prayers and alms" were testimonies, and God approved them. And our Lord announced *Zaccheus* a true son of Abraham, that is, a true child of God, before he was baptised. "Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," are the real and only necessary requisites for an introduction into the spiritual acceptance of Christ. But still that faith, which divorces the soul from sin, and brings it into a saving union with Christ, being

always ready for every good work, will ever most readily embrace the first opportunity to become an open member of the visible church of God.

Every member of the visible church professes at his baptism "faith and repentance," in order that he may be baptised: and these are required by baptism. Every one therefore before he can be properly admitted to baptism, professes to be a true member of Christ Jesus, that is, a true believer in him. Though many that are baptised are not what they profess to be; yet, having been admitted on their profession, they are considered and treated as truly spiritual and faithful.

Hence then it is obvious, that every person, *possessing* "faith and repentance," who is admitted into the visible church, is *actually* a spiritual member of Christ's mystical body, before he is admitted into the visible church by baptism. But it is quite necessary for the purposes of the Gospel, that Christ should have a visible church established in the world: and as he has appointed a *rite*, introductory to it, it has become a matter of general necessity, that every true believer should enter into it by this door. His true members, therefore, are chiefly found in this visible church; it being the keeper of the book of God,—the pillar and ground of the truth,—the general medium of salvation to a sinful world,—the great source of spiritual instruction and edification. Hence then, though Cornelius, from his eminent devotion and fear of God, must needs have been accepted by him, when his "prayers and alms went up for a memorial," yet this did not make it unnecessary nor inconsistent for him to hear from Peter's mouth, "words whereby he and his house should be saved." Though he was spiritually in a state of regeneration and salvation before, yet to be visibly planted in the true vine, is suitably called salvation. And we conceive that some such considerations as these, led the early Christian Fathers, at the first, to designate *baptism Salvation*; because saving doctrines were then openly and professedly embraced. Though the indistinctness of their ideas very soon drew them into an incautious and ambiguous mode of speaking upon the subject: and thus they afforded our modern writers a pretension for teaching destructive errors.

The truth and reality of this distinction between the

true and visible members of Christ, cannot scripturally be denied. Repentance and faith admit into the one community ; and baptism, with a profession of these two prerequisites, admits into the other. The real kingdom of God consists of men “ born of water *and* of the Spirit.”

The early Christian Fathers, however, though they did not wholly deny the distinction, yet made so little of it, and spoke so fervidly of the introduction into the visible church, that many of our modern divines have been led by their representations to deny this essential distinction altogether. One reason why the Fathers spoke in such ambiguous language, was their *peculiar situation*. The Christian church was young; the nations were grossly idolatrous and lying in wickedness ; the glory and mercies of the church of Christ appeared infinitely great ; there were strong temptations therefore for persons under conviction of the truth and necessity of believing the Christian religion, to conceal their belief and defer their baptism ;—these and many other things concurred in making the Fathers so warm and so peremptory on the subject of visible communion, that they scarcely could admit the possibility of salvation without baptism.

It must therefore be allowed that the Fathers had strong ground for insisting on the *necessity* of baptism to salvation, though they appear to have been over-rigorous in this respect. But a much greater evil has been very unfairly drawn out of the language with which they described the *efficacy of baptism*. The baptised—the regenerate—the saved, have modernly become nearly synonymous phrases, and things of almost equal import. By this awful error the visible church is made the sole church of Christ ; and every member admitted into it by baptism is viewed, of course, as nearly alike, regenerate and saved. The soft and tardy exceptions made to this sweeping assumption become nearly evanescent amidst a crowd of unconditional attestations.

It is true that the visible church cannot in practice *allow* the sanction of her authority, and the pronouncement of her blessing, to persons who do not by baptism enter her communion. Still it could never be wholly overlooked by the early church, that many spiritually minded catechumens, and others who never were of their order, must have been truly in union with Christ by faith,



*before* they were baptised. Nor could it escape any really discerning person, that those who came to baptism, (as *all* were required to do,) not only professing, but also possessing faith and repentance, *must* have been in a safe state for heaven before their baptism: though that *admission* could not be made till after it, nor at all to those who *declined* baptism. But it scarcely appears that the Fathers withheld the *admission* only of regeneration and salvation from persons having faith and repentance without baptism; they withheld regeneration and salvation itself. And they appear to have considered baptism as a part of regeneration, or as necessarily productive of it. So that faith and repentance were not themselves viewed as the new birth, but faith, repentance, *and* baptism.

Our church does not *pronounce* persons to be regenerate before, but after they are baptised. Yet she most decidedly considers the first beginning of salvation to consist in repentance and faith: and she clearly withholds all admission of spiritual regeneration from all unholy members of the professing body.

The primitive baptism, according to Christ's constitution, signed, sealed, testified, and represented the coming from Satan's kingdom into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Darkness and death occupied their former state and habitation; but now light, holiness, and salvation. The *visible* turning point in this glorious transition, was *baptism*. All their blessings therefore were viewed as included in this ordinance; and every thing was figuratively ascribed unto it. It was therefore garnished, as we saw in our second Tract, with all the names and titles used in the New Testament to designate and describe the character, the security, and the privileges of God's children, even as far as salvation itself. And, indeed, when we consider that their light was heavenly, their joy divine, their holiness pure, and their prospect assured salvation and eternal glory,—and that they justly looked upon their *baptism* as the *pledge* of their *spiritual marriage*, as the *token* of their union with Christ, as the seal of their salvation, and the key to the kingdom of heaven,—when we consider all these circumstances, we may well forgive them for using, in this connexion, “*fervid words*,” as Professor Pusey calls them, and for expressing “*thoughts that burn*.” Truly were persons in

such a situation to "hold their peace," we might almost say, "the stones would cry out."

In order to understand more accurately the language of the Fathers, and more correctly to comprehend the nature, importance, and efficacy, as well as the general necessity of baptism, as appointed by our Lord, and practised in the primitive church, we will introduce a modern *illustration* of a baptism of exactly the same description as those of early times. We who are brought up under the visible banners of divine protection, and who have the cloud of the Almighty's presence continually over our tabernacle, can appreciate but very imperfectly the fearful distance and awful state of the heathens, while "without hope and without God in the world:" nor can we fully enter into their peace and joy when suddenly "called out of darkness into marvellous light." But let us look at Gentile baptisms in *India* now, and we shall easily perceive how the ancient Fathers were led into the habit of speaking of baptism as regeneration, without supposing them to have mistaken or misunderstood the real difference between them; though mistakes on this important subject had very soon become the offspring of their incautious language.

When persons like ourselves see baptism daily administered without perceiving any visible effects flowing from it, they are extremely liable to undervalue baptism, and lose sight of its character as originally intended.\* Now let us view a recent baptism under circumstances of a more primitive nature; and this will carry us back to the apostles' "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost."—Respecting the public baptism of a Musselman, at Gurrackpore, the Rev. Mr. Wilkinson writes thus:—

"I hope he was baptised from above with the Holy

\* We have the impression on our minds, that the late celebrated *Robert Hall* considered, that baptism in certain cases might be dispensed with altogether, inasmuch as God's covenant blessings may be considered as virtually ratified and enjoyed in the constant attendance on Christian ordinances and open profession of the Christian name, without the visible symbol of Christ's church being received. Though we cannot think on this point with the renowned author of this opinion, it yet enables us to perceive how *circumstances* and situations may change men's views of the efficacy and importance of positive institutions.

Ghost. It is extraordinary to observe the effect of this sacred ordinance on the mind in this country, compared with what we witness in England, even at the baptism of adults. Here it is really a translation from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God's dear Son ; and the subjects of the ordinance, so far as they are under right influences, seem really to feel it as such. It was remarkably so in the case of the person in question. His own expressions of what his views and feelings were, can alone convey a proper idea. The mind carried back—then resting on the present—connexions to be broken—old habits to be given up—new connexions to be formed—new habits to be acquired—and a hundred circumstances connected with the past, present, and the future, do not operate slightly on a sensitive mind."

Would not this aged Musselman, all his life after, look back to and consider his *baptism* as the time of his conversion and regeneration, and this with a great degree of reason, though it is plain that his faith, and repentance, and spiritual state of soul were believed to be real and Christian *before* his baptism. Now had this man in the state supposed died (as two native Christians who gave "long and decided proofs" of their piety did last year in New Zealand) before he was baptised, would he not have been saved? Doubtless he would. Then did he not enjoy spiritual regeneration? Most certainly he did, else he could not be saved. This is what he must have understood, if his faith was firm and his Christian instruction good ; and yet he could not be content without baptism, and could not under his circumstances fairly consider himself in covenant with God, and properly classed among his people, till he had separated himself from his former connexions, ratified his engagements with God, and put on the livery and public character of Jesus Christ. He had not *entered* into the kingdom of God until he was baptised.

It is not only possible, but very likely, and we doubt not, very common in early times, that persons, emerging from a state of heathen darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel, did enjoy at their baptism a high degree of divine light and spiritual consolation, by which Christianity was distinguished from false religions, and by which its open profession was distinguished and "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." When Christ went up out of

the water, "the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended and abode on him." What was this but anointing the head for the sake of the future members, and God setting his seal of approbation upon his Son's willing obedience to his divine command. And is not Christ herein our example? though he needed it not for his own sake, he yet did submit to it for us on whose behalf he stood.

The *process*, as in the foregoing instance, which results in baptism, is properly but one process, of which baptism is a part: and by using a very strong figure, the whole may be called regeneration; but most evidently it is a very strong figure—the result for the means. All the previous instruction sealed, confirmed, and terminating in baptism, and the instating of this follower of Mahomet among the disciples of Christ, were divine means, by which this man's soul was renewed and saved. But still they were but means and not the effect, and no part of the effect. *That* was the regeneration of the soul; *these* were instruction and baptism. The instruction was blessed to the renewal of the soul in righteousness, and baptism sealed, confirmed, and probably increased and gladdened the whole.

Had this taken place in *England* instead of *India*, how could the matter have been practically viewed otherwise than as a baptism in conformity with the usage of the English church. He would have been received as a pious soul, as a brother beloved; but he could not have been so declared and so esteemed before his baptism and his public exchange of Mahometanism for Christianity. Could he have been acknowledged and called regenerate, before he was publicly introduced as a member of Christ's church? At least could any regular *appointment* in a church be made to look towards him with such an aspect? His baptism would not indeed be called a "part of his regeneration:" but it would be considered as necessary to the public recognition and admission of it. If then such a person were truly pious before baptism, but only acknowledged such, and pronounced regenerate after baptism, it is manifest, that it is not real piety that is called, in such a case, regeneration, but the assumption and public recognition of a new character, thus evidencing and attesting his regeneration, which before this the church could not properly acknowledge.



## NOTE to p. 27.

The covenant made with Abraham and *sealed* by circumcision, and the same covenant made by Christ and *sealed* by baptism, require, and imply both on the part of God and on the part of man, *all* that can be required in any covenant. When spiritual persons enter by faith into covenant with God in Christ Jesus, and thus *seal* their engagements to be his faithful servants, they do *that*, and *only* that, which is required of every one who is baptised in his name, and which every one in his baptism professes and engages to do “with all his heart.”

We make the foregoing remark, because this subject, the turning point, in one respect, in this controversy, seems to be very imperfectly understood. Bishop Bethell, aware that when the spiritual blessings of God's covenant are legitimately applied, the covenant must be *sealed* on *man's* part, if it be considered as a mutual compact, has endeavoured to evade this sealing on the part of man, and refers the matter of baptism wholly to God. *General View*, pp. 46, 47, 81, 82. That God does set his mark or seal upon the soul, is very true. But then, whenever this is done, man also “sets to his seal that God is true.”

There is no genuine, that is, no beneficial covenant between God and man, until man complies ; until then it is not a covenant conveying blessings. When man believes, which he professes to do, and is enjoined to do in this ordinance, he *seals* his covenant with God. Man is as truly a party in the covenant as God is. Not indeed in forming it or enjoining the obligation to unite in it, but in its operative character. God has appointed the covenant and prescribed its terms “without asking any one's consent,” whether it shall be so or not. But God does require, and also asks man's consent and approbation of the covenant thus appointed, both in his word and by his ministers ; and he does so in the most tender and engaging terms : and man's approbation of the Almighty's claim and favours is in itself a “setting to his seal that God is true.” And the covenant is no covenant, God is not his God, man is not of the number of his people, divine blessings cannot pass over to him, *until* his consent

and approbation are given, and so the sealing be effected. A covenant does not answer its ends and purposes till both parties unite. No blessings can be transmitted to man, until God and he accord : and no curse can follow, but on their disagreement.

Men are not, indeed, forced to comply ; but they are laid under very powerful and urgent motives to receive the seal of this covenant. If they choose to risk death, they may rebel, and refuse to believe and be baptised. But consent *is required*. The seal is no seal, to answer the scripture purpose, but as a "token" of man's consent of heart with God. "It shall be," said God to Abraham, "a token of the covenant between me and you." It is exceedingly difficult to ascertain the real ideas of Dr. Pusey on this subject. For though he labours very hard to prove that the early Christian Fathers were in the right when they spoke so much about persons being "sealed" in baptism ; he does not appear to recognize the part which righteous persons perform in their setting to their "seal that God is true." Nay, indeed, he takes pains to prove that in the case of baptismal regeneration he is wholly inactive. He writes thus :—

"But now, as if to exclude all idea of human agency in this our spiritual creation, to shut out all human co-operation and boasting, as though we had in any way contributed to our own birth, and were not wholly the creatures of His hands, no loop-hole has been left us, no other instrument named ; our birth (when its direct means are spoken of) is attributed to the baptism of water, and of the Spirit, and to that only." 13. "Faith, and love, and prayer" are here excluded. 12.

We shall not now anticipate the discussion of any future proof that the above assertion of Dr. Pusey is highly inconsistent with other statements in the same publication, and especially with the following sentiments of Bishop Bethell, whose "theory of regeneration" is such as does not "exclude the voluntary agency of man from any share—in the conversion of the soul to holiness." p. 37.

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Smith, Elder, 1838.  
36 p. ; 19 cm.

At head of title: Plain tracts for  
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subjects of baptism and regeneration,  
etc. with an especial reference to the  
Oxford Tracts, etc., etc.

1. Baptism. I. Plain tracts for  
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